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House of Representatives

FILNER AMENDMENT TO H.R. 2829

HON. BOB FILNER

OF CALIFORNIA
IN THE HOUSE OF
REPRESENTATIVES

Mr. FILNER. Mr. Chairman, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

I want to thank Chairman **SOUDER** and Ranking Member **CUMMINGS** for bringing us this bill, and I have an amendment based on my experience as the Congressman that represents the whole California-Mexico border.

Just a few weeks ago, we discovered almost a mile-long tunnel, half on each side of the border, in my district. We all like to take credit for things in our district, but this is one that I do not take credit for.

It was a very sophisticated tunnel the way it was constructed, the way it was shored up, the way it drained water, and it was even air-conditioned. We found 2 tons of marijuana that was left behind. Who knows what went through that tunnel, whether it was people, drugs or potentially weapons of mass destruction?

Thinking about that and looking at the reaction we had in San Diego over those tunnels, I thought we should slightly amend this bill to authorize the ONDCP to coordinate with all relevant agencies to combat border tunnels that

are used to smuggle drugs, people, and could potentially be used to smuggle terrorists and their weapons, specifically between California and Mexico.

It gives the office authority to join in the development and implementation of a strategy to fight these subterranean border tunnels and requires that the office submit to Congress a recommendation for penalties for those involved either in digging or using these tunnels.

We have been dealing with this issue over many years. Eight tunnels between San Diego and Tijuana have been discovered this year alone, and there have been over 20 tunnels discovered in the last decade.

We know that with all of the fences that we are building, double fences, triple fences, walls, what we have here is an easy way under all of those fences that we are building. So we need to have a far more coordinated policy. There is not even a law against tunneling under the border! There are laws for smuggling and for other parts of the crime, but not specifically for tunneling under our international border. So we

have to take note of them. We have to concentrate and focus our efforts. We have to understand that terrorism can find a whole new approach to getting into the United States through these tunnels underneath our international border. They are a threat to us and America. They allow drugs and people to come through.

These are busy times for the Border Patrol, the customs agents, immigration folks; but if we are going to send these agencies to fight a war on drugs, to fight a war against illegal behavior, we have to send them the proper tools. I believe this amendment will do it.

I want to thank the chairman for his leadership on these issues, for coming personally to the border to see the situation. Through my

district, Mr. Chairman, every day 300,000 people go back and forth legally. That is the movement of a major amount of people, and we have to do that efficiently. But within that amount of movement, people take advantage with illegal movement. That is what we have to try to get at. We have to try to get at the illegal while making it efficient for all of those people going back and forth for trade, shopping, family visits, for schooling, for cultural visits. We have to allow that to continue efficiently while stopping, in a more efficient fashion, the illegal activity.

I thank both Mr. *Cummings* and Mr. *Souder* for their support.

Mr. Chairman, I yield back the balance of my time.